



Citizens Project

FREEDOM WATCH

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This publication is a free, nonpartisan service provided by Citizens Project to encourage informed voting and voter turnout. Candidates were asked to limit their responses to 60 words or less. No editing for grammar, punctuation, or spelling was done to the responses. Responses can also be viewed on our website: www.CitizensProject.org.

A New Year and a New Look for Freedom Watch

To our loyal FW readers,

The Freedom Watch Editorial Board and CP's Communication Committee met in the early Fall to discuss how to reach out to more people in our community who share our values. Because FW is our main method of communicating our work on key community issues, we realized we need to get the ideas and articles in FW out to the public more often. So for 2007, we will be trying out a new format for Freedom Watch. We will continue to publish four full editions of FW – one per quarter including our two candidate surveys. In addition, CP will be running a 1/2 page article in the Independent every other week. This will allow CP to make timelier responses to issues of importance of our readers. We will also continue to post all FW material on our website, www.citizensproject.org. Hopefully, this will raise the larger community's awareness of Citizens Project and rally more support to our call for equal rights, diversity, separation of church and state, and civic engagement in our community.

See you more often in the New Year,

Christina Student
Executive Director

Ref I and Amendment 43 results show challenges ahead

Reprinted with permission from The Bell Policy Center • Budget Watch, Nov. 9, 2006 • Vol. 4, No. 9

In 1992, Colorado voters approved Amendment 2, prohibiting laws that barred discrimination against gays and lesbians such as those already adopted in Denver, Boulder and Aspen. Just prior to that election, polls showed Amendment 2 failing, but it passed 53 to 47 percent.

History repeated itself this year. On Tuesday, Colorado voters rejected Referendum I by 53 to 47 percent, a statutory change that recognized domestic partnerships for same-sex couples, and passed Amendment 43 by 56 to 44 percent, a constitutional amendment defining marriage.

Ref I, referred to the voters from the 2006 General Assembly, specified that same-sex partnerships are not equivalent to marriage. Coloradans for Fairness, the pro-Ref I campaign, stressed that the new law simply established basic legal rights, such as inheriting property, making medical decisions and sharing in parenting. As with Amendment 2, polls prior to the election looked promising, but the numbers began to erode a week prior to Election Day.

Amendment 43 took language already in state law defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman and placed it in the constitution. Unlike many of the marriage amendments across the country, Amendment 43 does not prohibit domestic partnerships. Had Ref I also passed, the two could have taken effect without legal conflict.

The Bell Policy Center supported Referendum I and opposed Amendment 43 because our core commitment to expanding opportunity for all Coloradans includes the basic legal rights for same sex couples. That opportunity would have been defined and reinforced under Ref I. As Coretta Scott King said in 2004, "Constitutional amendments should be used to expand freedom, not restrict it."

Focus on the Family and other conservative Christian groups supported A-43, and Family Action Inc., their advocacy branch, opposed Ref I.

Nationally, eight propositions defining marriage and in some cases banning domestic partnerships were on the ballot around the country; all passed except the Arizona measure. Twenty other states have already passed such measures.

Colorado voters could have faced four ballot questions on this issue instead of two. One proposed measure to outlaw domestic partnerships failed to make the signature threshold. Coloradans for Fairness collected enough signatures to place a response to this measure on the ballot, but withdrew it when the first measure didn't make it.

After the passage of Amendment 2 in 1992, Colorado was branded "the Hate State." Gay activists tossed Colorado products into the Hudson River in New York and the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Association of Social Workers, for example, cancelled conventions here. This is unlikely to happen this time because, sadly, similar measures passed around the country no longer make Colorado unique.

Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Amendment 2, heeding arguments made by Jean Dubofsky, a Bell board member and former state Supreme Court justice. The failure of Ref I will not offer us that kind of redemption. Instead, we must work to change our state, one person at a time.

Justice Dubofsky points out an important distinction between Amendment 2 and Ref. I. "Amendment 2 took away basic civil rights. Ref I would have added rights for same-sex couples we could not have anticipated in 1992." In addition, she suggests that the strong support shown by younger voters for Ref I allows hope that attitudes are changing, if gradually, in our state.

A letter from Coloradans for Fairness chairman Sean Duffy offered this challenge to supporters:

"Today, Colorado has a better understanding of the challenges these good couples face, which gives us a foundation upon which we can make future progress...Our disappointment must not turn into discouragement. The opponents of basic legal rights want to end this struggle here, today, and watch us walk away in frustration. You and I know that the strength of this effort won't be diminished by one setback at the polls. We have much work ahead of us in 2007!"

Laurie Hirschfeld Zeller - Senior Policy Advisor

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History of the Recall Campaign

The Colorado Springs School District Eleven End the D11 Chaos Recall Campaign was launched on June 7, 2006 in response to the firing of Superintendent Dr. Sharon Thomas on June 1.

Dr. Thomas's contract was terminated without cause by a 4-3 vote of the Board of Education, despite numerous appeals not to do so. Employee group representatives from the teachers, principals and special services personnel presented letters in support of the superintendent at the hearing but were ignored. The termination came at a cost to the District of approximately half a million dollars. Voting to terminate Dr. Thomas were Eric Christen, Sandy Shakes, Craig Cox, and Willie Breazell. Voting against the termination were John Gudvangen, Tami Hasling, and Sandra Mann.

The recall petition, initiated by D11 parent Ann Oatman-Gardener, and Mary Ellen McNally, and Norvell Simpson, former D11 parents and Board of Education members, stated:
PETITION TO RECALL SANDY SHAKES FROM THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT 11 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

"We the taxpayers of D11, through this recall, take back responsibility for the financial stability and education of the children of the largest School District in Colorado Springs, which has successfully educated generations of Colorado Springs children."

More than 250 citizens attended a kick-off meeting for the recall campaign on June 12.

Between June 12 and August 12 nearly 400 petitioners collected more than 19,000 signatures on each recall petition.

On August 25, the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder verified the validity of 16,443 signatures on the petitions to recall Eric Christen and 16,003 on the petition to recall Sandy Shakes, surpassing the 15,000 signatures required to bring the recall before the voters of D11.

Four individuals, including Eric Christen, filed protests regarding the petitions during the 15 day protest period. As a result of the protests, five signatures were

removed from the total count because they contained a printed name but no signature. All other protests were dismissed as unsubstantiated.

The recall election was certified on September 20. Due to conflicting state statutes it was not possible to have the recall election be part of the November 7 general election.

On September 27 the Board of Education voted 3-2 to hold an all mail ballot election on December 12 rather than a precinct election on December 19. The cost to the District of the mail ballot is estimated to be \$187,093.

According to the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder, a precinct election would have cost a minimum of \$313,086.

Directors Gudvangen, Hasling, and Breazell voted for the less expensive option. Directors Cox and Christen voted for the more expensive precinct election. Directors Mann and Shakes were absent, however Director Shakes sent an email message arguing for a precinct election based on a state wide vote regarding mail ballots elections.

Ballots for the recall election will be mailed between 11/17 and 11/25 and must be returned by 5:00 p.m. on December 12.

www.endthed11chaos.com



Sandy's statement:

Don't let a small group of activists hijack the will of the people in the 2003 election and my goal of bringing real accountability and improved student achievement to District 11. Those seeking to throw me off the Board have made a big issue about the Board's decision to terminate the former superintendent. This is an attempt to maintain a "no accountability, status quo" culture in District 11.

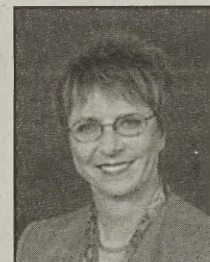
I supported the hiring of the former superintendent in May of 2005. As president of the Board at that time, I worked closely with her, and within weeks it was readily apparent that the former superintendent had neither the ability nor the desire to lead the District with the focus on student achievement that the voters had demanded.

The former superintendent received a mid-year and final evaluation from the Board. Six of the seven Board members adopted a final evaluation that was unsatisfactory for the former superintendent. After careful consideration, I decided with the majority of the Board that further efforts to have her address her deficiencies would not be

beneficial for the students or our District. Waiting for the former superintendent to improve her performance would result in unnecessary delay of the critical initiatives. The majority of the Board voted to terminate the former superintendent's contract on June 1, 2006.

I promised accountability when I ran in 2003, and I have delivered accountability. I have served with integrity and unwavering passion for District 11. As a retired teacher, I remain dedicated to achieving quality education for all students and the success of District 11.

I only have eleven months left to serve of my four-year term. I encourage you to vote to retain me in office so that I can complete the initiatives I have championed.



Eric's statement:

Without Christen's presence on the board, (Watson) doesn't think the district would be looking as closely at test scores... or ways to improve student performance." "He brought the discussion to the table. There is a feeling we need to do something now..."

Lori Watson-D11 teacher and recall leader quoted in Gazette.

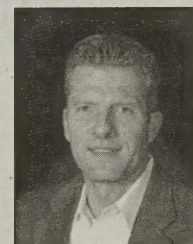
Three years ago I promise to make student achievement and protecting the \$400 million given to us each year by taxpayers my top priorities on the board. I have remained true to my promise. How?

1. Student achievement has increased two years in a row on our watch per SCAPs - a first in D11 history.
2. In hiring Dr. Bishop as Superintendent, we have someone who has accomplished more in three months that his predecessor did in twelve. He will faithfully implement our most significant achievement as a board which is our site-based management system which takes money and decisions away from our bloated administration and puts them in the schools;

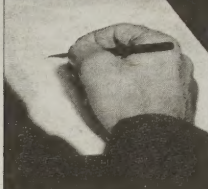
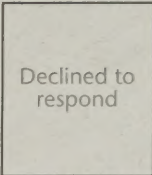
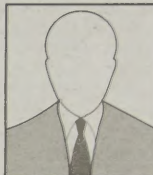
3. Organized three math town halls which we have put us on the verge of ridding D11 of our "fuzzy" math programs where calculators are handed out in kindergarten and students never learn times tables;
4. Demanded that students not walk at graduation unless they have met graduation requirements and that they practice of social promotion ends;
5. Implemented a performance pay plan for schools that rewards those who increase student achievement;

Those satisfied with the status quo of 27% of our kids being proficient in math and 50% being literate are trying to recall me because students are first on my list. I will continue to fight to see that the \$17,000 we spend per child this year alone educates every student regardless of race or income.

It has been an honor to serve you and our children.



REPLACEMENT CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2006

CANDIDATES TO REPLACE ERIC CHRISTEN IF HE IS RECALLED:			CANDIDATES TO REPLACE SANDY SHAKES IF SHE IS RECALLED:		
					
1. Why are you running for school board? 2. What is the role of a School Board member? Please describe one personal characteristic you have that would help you serve in that role. 3. What do you believe are the most pressing issues the District 11 school board should address in the next school year? 4. Do you support the teaching of responsible sex education, including information about both abstinence and contraception, in public schools? 5. Are you supportive of inviting community service providers into classrooms? 6. Would you support the inclusion of intelligent design (ID) in science curriculum? 7. Explain your philosophy regarding charter schools and vouchers programs.	Albert Gonzales 950 Broadview Place Colorado Springs 634-3901 1. The 4 year graduation rate as set by the district is too low and the majority of students of color fail to reach that goal. 2. The role of a school board is to set policy; this is done by being able to communicate with the other board members. 3. Ensuring the tax payers that their hard earned dollars are being used the best possible way to educate their children. 4. YES. Only with the consent of the parents and by qualified health professionals. 5. YES. Since Planned Parenthood performs medical procedures those would not be discussed as an alternative means of contraception. 6. NO. Would you support the inclusion of intelligent design (ID) in the science curriculum? 7. I am opposed to the use of public tax dollars going to private and parochial schools. I would like to see public schools research the good charter schools, those that have good test results, and try to implement what makes them a success.	Charlie Bobbitt 3618 Alpine Place Colorado Springs 574-0498 1. I believe in public education. I believe we need many positive voices for District 11 and I will be one of those. I am ready to make a difference by my dedication to bring stability to District 11. 2. A School Board member role is to set policy and work effectively with school administration to make sure the district goals are met. I think my personal interest in improving public education along with my business background and my ability to find compromise will work well on the school board. 3. Improving student achievement at all grade levels. Implement the superintendent 25 point plan to improve District 11 Maintain strong neighborhood schools 4. YES. Schools, in partnership with families and the community, should provide age-appropriate accurate information on these important topics to help students make responsible decisions. Yes information about abstinence and contraception should both be explored. 5. YES. The school board should engage the public and community experts to offer programs on these topics in the best interest of students, the schools, and the community. Community service providers can continue to play an important role. 6. NO. Intelligent design theory is not science and would be more appropriate in a philosophy or world religions curriculum. 7. District 11 has been at the forefront of charter schools; we currently have eight. The costs and benefits of charters must be balanced against the needs of all district students. Charter school decisions must be made within the district not delegated to outsiders. As an advocate of neighborhood schools and believe we need to continue efforts to improve their performance and make them a vital part of every neighborhood.	Gregory Garcia 5460 Wells Fargo Dr Colorado Springs 592-9150 Declined to respond	Jan Tanner 2728 Northcrest Drive Colorado Springs 531-6641 1. I want to bring the Board's focus back to providing positive direction for the District's administration and allowing teachers to do what they do best – teach our students. This will increase student achievement. 2. A Board member should participate in discussions and establish policies that will help guide the district. A Board member should be familiar with existing policies. Specific duties are defined by law. I can listen to others' views, research and carefully consider information offered, and provide thoughtful input to discussions. My aim is to bring more consensus to the decision making process. 3. Increasing student achievement is most important. The graduation rate needs to be raised. We need to make sure our workforce has access to the resources necessary to meet the educational needs of ALL students. 4. YES. 5. YES. This is the district's current policy. This benefits our students as well as involves individual community members in our schools. 6. NO. 7. Charter schools are public schools, supported by our tax dollars, which receive waivers from certain requirements put on traditional public schools. Voucher programs do not support public education; rather they remove public oversight of how tax dollars are used. Colorado voters have rejected vouchers and a legislated pilot program was declared unconstitutional in our state.	Don Schley 1512 Lorraine Street Colorado Springs 471-1879 1. As a resident of and civic activist within D-11, I want to reverse D-11's decline, focus on student achievement, and make the District again an attractive place for families to educate their children. 2. A school board member represents and promotes the community's interest in setting policies that promote effective, quality education. The member works to select an outstanding superintendent who has goals compatible with these interests, then facilitates that person's management of those policies. School board members must bring to the table workable ideas. They must prevent the educational bureaucracy from following its own internal agenda. I bring to the table negotiating skills and the ability to work across factional lines based on what works. 3. a. Improving student academic performance now. b. Adopting a workable math curriculum – not the ideologically-based "constructivist math" programs that have ravaged our school systems for over 20 years. In conjunction with this approach, banning calculators until the later years of secondary education is necessary. c. Hiring teachers who are subject matter experts, not simply holders of teaching certificates. d. Establishing "master teachers" at each school and paying such teachers substantial stipends to mentor new teachers. e. Implementing the site-based management model. f. Reduce administrative costs by cutting out the redundancy in the D-11 hierarchy. g. Reviewing and eliminating costly, unnecessary consulting contracts. 4. YES. 5. I assume that this question applies to the controversy over having Planned Parenthood in the classroom, teaching our students sex education. On this assumption, I support hiring the best professionals available to teach this sensitive subject. These persons could be experienced nurses, health professionals, psychologists who deal with these issues and other qualified persons. I do not support outsourcing this task to any political advocacy groups of any sort. In the area of abstinence vs. contraception, the public education system must provide a forum where students may openly discuss these issues from multiple perspectives. 6. Intelligent Design is not a science per se, but philosophy. Still, science is a philosophically-based method of inquiry, so the issues of intelligent design vs. emergence of the universe by accident or the idea of intrinsic rationality (as with the ancient Stoics) cannot be avoided. Students need to be exposed to the broad range of ideas that arise within the discipline of science in a scientifically-based, technological civilization. Excluding intelligent design – the philosophy of the Enlightenment that produced modern science – is itself irrational. 7. Locally controlled charter schools provide superior and innovative public education. Charter schools, properly conceived and managed, can solve many of public education's problems. Colorado Springs D-11 is not politically ready for a strict voucher system, but if D-11's decline continues, vouchers will become necessary.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TED HAGGARD STORY: THE CHOICE IS ALWAYS OURS

By The Rev. Dr. Ellen Johnson-Fay, Minister Emerita, All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, Colorado Springs

*Love is not concerned
with whom you pray
or where you slept
the night you ran away from home.
Love is concerned
That the beating of your heart
Should kill no one.*

- Alice Walker

The Ted Haggard saga has provided a great drama for the community and deep suffering for him, his family, and New Life Church as they all try to make sense of the contradictions between his life and his teaching. I have felt profound sadness, disappointment, and compassion for him and his family. I have also felt anger at the manner in which this personal and public tragedy is being exploited by the media and used by the extremists of the religious right.

It is unfortunate that Ted Haggard's conditioning has convinced him that same-sex attractions are evil and the work of the devil; it is also unfortunate that he continues to reject the part of himself which he considers "dark and repulsive." His aversion has created not only a sense of self-hatred that has harmed himself and his loved ones, but has also harmed the wider gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community in Colorado Springs as he and his followers project their discrimination outward with harsh judgments and blame.

I am saddened because the excessive publicity given to this "scandal" may have deepened the fears of religious conservatives. This publicity might have helped lead to

the passage of the restrictive definition of marriage in Amendment 43. It also may have influenced the failure of Referendum 1 which would have allowed committed same-sex couples access to health care and other legal benefits still reserved only for heterosexual couples.

There is another path that I wish Ted Haggard would choose for the sake of his own healing and for the health and well being of his family, his congregation, and the wider community.

Ted Haggard could choose wholeness. He could choose to embrace that part of himself that he has rejected for so long that he may not even remember when that rejection began. As Pastor Haggard continues to look deeply within himself, he could come to recognize that feelings of attraction and love toward men are a part of the goodness within him. He could discover that feelings of attraction toward members of the same sex are a natural potential in many human beings. Sexuality is a natural expression of the infinite diversity of the universe. He could acknowledge that it is a cultural choice to judge such feelings as sinful, evil, or wrong; a choice that has caused great pain and suffering through the centuries. Such judgment is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus. Pastor Haggard could come to realize that such natural feelings, when repressed, are likely to be expressed in unhealthy and harmful ways. Yet when such feelings are embraced, they can find expression in wholesome ways.

He could look to Pastor Benjamin Reynolds for spiritual guidance.

In coincidental timing, Pastor Benjamin Reynolds, much

like Haggard, has had to resign from his position as Senior Pastor of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church because some people in his congregation were not ready to accept his advocacy for gays and lesbians from the pulpit. However, being gay himself, Rev. Reynolds embraced his inner reality with compassion, pride and acceptance and sought to end discrimination against gays that sometimes occurs within black congregations. He has acted publicly with integrity and honesty about his true self, at a great personal cost and with deep regret at ending the pastoral relationship with people he has served with love, inspiration and courage.

Inter-racial marriage was illegal only half a century ago, and most of the population of the United States considered it to be sinful. I hope it doesn't take another half century for same-sex love to be accepted with justice, equity and compassion. I hope that we will be able to look back upon the "Ted Haggard Saga" and recognize it as a turning point in the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the overcoming of societal prejudices, and the turning back of legislation restricting the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

*Who says it is easy? But we have the power.
I watch the faces deepen all around me.
It is the time of change, the saving hour.
The word is not fear, the word we live,
But an old word suddenly made new,
As we learn it again, as we bring it alive:
Love. Love. Love. Love.*

- May Sarton

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- Sharon Berthrong, CP board member

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MISSION:

Citizens Project spotlights issues in the Pikes Peak region and mobilizes people to strengthen the traditional values of our nation: equal rights, individual freedoms, separation of church and state, civic engagement, and respect for diversity.



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